

↓

In memoriam:
Father Hebert P. Bessette, O. M. I
(1888-1952)

Very Rev. Fr. Joseph R. Birch, O.M.I., Provincial of St. Peter's Province writes about our Fr. Bessette, on May 6th, 1952:

« The news reached us yesterday of the death of Reverend Father Hebert Peter Bessette at Sechelt, B. C. He died at 7.45 a.m. in the chapel of our Indian Residential School. One could not choose a more appropriate place in which to give one's soul to God.

Father Bessette was born June 28th., 1888 at Lumby, B. C., the son of Peter Bessette and Virginia Eunice Martin. He was a distant relative of the saintly Brother Andre of the Oratory, Montreal, who bore the same family name. He was baptized in his home parish, and received the Sacrament of Confirmation at the hands of Archbishop Dontenwill, O.M.I., at the old St. Peter's Church, New Westminster. After grade school at New Westminster, he went to Holy Angels College, Buffalo, N. Y., where he made his Juniorate. The next seven years were spent at Tewksbury, Mass. Here he made his novitiate and scholasticate. It was in the Novitiate chapel that he made his first vows and final oblation, and was ordained to the priesthood June 15th., 1912.

Receiving his obedience for what was then the Vicariate of British Columbia, his first assignment was to St. Peter's Church, New Westminster. Four years later he was sent to Sacred Heart, Kamloops, which is now the Cathedral parish of that diocese. After two years here he was appointed curate at Holy Rosary Cathedral, Vancouver, and later served the missions at Cranbrook, B. C. In this work he

travelled, extensively in Western Canada and down the Pacific Coast as far south as California. He was a most effective preacher. He spoke with an unusual facility and his mission instructions were outstanding models of clarity, logic and comprehensiveness.

In March 1928 he was appointed parish priest of Holy Family, Fernie, where he built the new parochial school and when the Fathers of S. Peter's Province moved into Ottawa he was assigned to St. Joseph's to preach missions in Eastern Canada. His next obedience was to the pastorate of St. Joseph's, Saskatoon.

It was while he was stationed at Kamloops Indian School that he learned of his serious heart condition which ultimately caused his sudden death. He accepted the news with a calm and cheerfulness that betrayed the depth of his faith. For the past few years he has spoken in the most matter of fact way about his impending death which he accepted in advance as the holy Will of God. This attitude and disposition seem to make it most appropriate that he should give up his soul in the presence of Our Eucharistic God.

He was a most ardent Oblate and a zealous priest. His love and enthusiasm for the Congregation and our Province knew no bounds.

He was a lovable man with a tender and sympathetic heart, a kindness and charity which won for him the affection of the laity with whom he came in contact and his brethren in religion with whom he lived. As a former subject of his in Fernie, B.C., I can give firsthand testimony of this.

One of the finest tributes, which certainly was not meant for publication, was paid him by a non-Catholic Doctor who last year submitted to us a medical report which ended with this postscript: "If I personally may submit my feeling in the matter of his transfer, as one who has come to know him,

may I say he has been accepted as the village Cure, and all peoples look upon him as a true Father and Friend to all the community, whence we, as a typical community would like to have him remain in our midst as a councillor and friend ». To those who knew him intimately, his death brings the pang and pain of great loss. *R. I. P.*